



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 105th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 144

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, JULY 6, 1998

No. 87

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 14, 1998, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, JULY 6, 1998

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Dear Father, we return to the work of this busy month with the words and music from the Fourth of July celebration sounding in our souls. We pray together today, remembering the first prayer of dependence prayed for the delegates to the Continental Congress in 1774 that eventually led to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Now that the fireworks are over, work in us the fire of that same dependence on You that was the secret of truly great leaders throughout our history. We pray for the women and men of this Senate. Enlarge their hearts until they are big enough to contain the gift of Your Spirit; expand their minds until they are capable of thinking Your thoughts; deepen their mutual trust so that they can work harmoniously for what is best for this Nation. You know all the legislation to be debated and voted on before the August recess. Grant the Senators an unprecedented dependence on You, an unreserved desire to seek Your will, and an unlimited supply of Your supernatural strength.

Now we move forward into this 223d year of our history as a nation with renewed dependence on You and renewed interdependence on one another as fellow patriots. Help us to be willing, in the spirit of our founders, to stake our reliance on You and pledge our lives,

fortunes, and sacred honor for the next stage of Your strategy for America.

Lord of all life, we ask You to intervene and extinguish the fires that are sweeping throughout the State of Florida. Be with Senators MACK and GRAHAM as they personally comfort and care for the thousands whose homes have been destroyed and whose lives have been disrupted. In the Name of our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

Mr. HAGEL. I thank the Chair.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period of morning business previously ordered for today be extended until 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 2:30. Following morning business, it is the leader's intention to begin consideration of the VA-HUD appropriations bill. It is hoped that Members will come to the floor during today's session to offer and debate amendments to the VA-HUD bill. There will be no rollcall votes during

Monday's session, so any votes ordered with respect to the VA-HUD bill will be postponed to occur on Tuesday, July 7, at a time to be determined by the two leaders.

During Tuesday's session, under a previous order, there will be a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the product liability bill at 9:30 a.m. Following that vote, the Senate will resume consideration of the VA-HUD bill and may also consider the IRS conference report Tuesday afternoon. The Senate could also consider any other legislative or executive items cleared for action.

The majority leader would like to remind all Members that July will be a very busy month with late night sessions during each week. The cooperation of all Members will be necessary for the Senate to complete its work prior to the August recess.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. HAGEL assumed the chair.)

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 2168

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I ask unanimous consent that at 2:30 p.m.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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today the Senate begin consideration of the HUD/VA appropriations bill.

Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I now ask that the Senate stand in recess until 2:30 p.m. today following the remarks of the Senator from Oregon.

Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Oregon, Mr. WYDEN.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, every Member of this body has watched horrified these last few months at the outbreak of gun violence that has struck America's schools. Now, with the new school year just a few weeks away, it is time for this body to respond to America's parents who are frightened for their youngsters and are asking, what can be done to protect their children when they are at school?

Frankly, a lot of those parents don't believe that this Congress will produce very much. They know there has been considerable acrimony about the whole debate over guns in America. Certainly there are many areas where reasonable people can differ. There are constitutional protections with respect to the right to bear arms, and at the same time we are also concerned about the safety of those youngsters when they are away at school.

Senator GORDON SMITH, my colleague from Oregon, and I believe it is time to set politics aside with respect to this issue of gun violence in our schools. That is why we have teamed up on important legislation which we believe ought to be enacted by the time school starts in the fall. We don't think this is the complete answer to this scourge of school violence, gun violence, that our youngsters face, but we think it can make a real difference.

We propose this legislation after the tragedy in Springfield, OR. As the Presiding Officer of this body knows, there has been a rash of these violent incidents at our schools. The problems have literally been seen in schools from coast to coast. Senator SMITH and I have introduced legislation which I believe would lay out the beginnings of a rational policy to control school violence in America.

What we have proposed—we did it after consulting with families, law enforcement officials, educators, people who are for gun control, people who are against gun control—we have proposed legislation which would stipulate that when a young person brings a gun to school, that would, in effect, be a five-alarm warning to society. It would make it very clear that at that point there is a real threat to young people, to teachers, and our society. And young people who bring a gun to school, under our legislation, would be detained for up to 72 hours for a com-

prehensive evaluation, from the standpoint of mental health considerations, law enforcement issues, family questions, the whole gamut of concerns that ought to be looked at when a young person brings a gun to school.

The alleged killer at Thurston High School, in Springfield, OR, was apprehended at school with a gun the day before he shot more than 20 of his classmates. That day, the police made a decision which is duplicated each day across our Nation, a decision that seemed reasonable at the time. The youngster was released to his parents, parents who were themselves teachers and who were known to be concerned and involved in the lives of their children. Currently, many police departments across America have complete discretion to treat young people caught with a gun at school in the manner they deem appropriate. As Springfield's own police chief has argued, the evaluation that needs to occur in these situations is beyond the means and capacity of most police forces across our country.

So Senator SMITH and I have introduced legislation which would provide an incentive for each State to enact a law requiring a mandatory 72-hour detention for any child caught with a gun at school. If a State passes such a law, it will be eligible for an additional 25 percent in funding under the Juvenile Justice Act. The cost of this legislation is small, perhaps \$25 million a year, and certainly modest when you look at the State's overall requirements in the effort to prevent school violence.

Now, Mr. President, we are not suggesting that this is all that needs to be done. Certainly, though, our first responsibility when a child brings a gun to school is to protect all of the kids who come to that school armed only with their books and their calculators. Children caught with a gun at school ought to be detained for a sufficient period to protect the other children and to evaluate the degree to which they are a threat to themselves and those around them.

I believe this legislation can win the support of every Member of this body, be enacted in time for the opening of the fall school year and should be acted on as soon as possible. Mr. President, Bill Clinton has spoken favorably of this legislation during his visit to Springfield, OR. The Nation's mayors—Democrats, Republicans, liberals, conservatives—have spoken favorably of this legislation. I am very hopeful that even though this body has an extremely busy schedule in the weeks ahead, there will be time, on a bipartisan basis, to ensure that this legislation moves forward.

According to Larry Bentz, principal of Thurston High School in Springfield, OR, the Thurston High community is slowly returning to some semblance of normalcy. The kids are engaged in the traditions of summer—swimming, playing basketball, summer jobs. With the memories of the brutal shooting at the

high school seared into their memories, the parents are trying to push ahead and return to family routines and responsibilities. But they want to make sure that this body, and elected officials everywhere, don't forget about the gun violence that has shattered young lives and families in Springfield, OR—and, in fact, in five States over the last school year. Senator SMITH and I urge that this body not let that happen. We ought to listen and learn from the lessons of Springfield and commit to doing our part to end school gun violence now as the schools look to opening their doors for a new school year.

Now, the Thurston community is still processing the tragedy at Thurston High. They are debating a variety of approaches and ideas for reducing school violence. Senator SMITH and I don't pretend to have all of the answers, but we know there are some practical steps that the U.S. Senate can take, and take promptly, to make our schools safer in America.

There are other steps that need to be taken, Mr. President. We have to make certain that communities have the resources to evaluate kids in trouble. I heard again and again, as I visited with families in Springfield, from hard-working, middle-class families, that they simply could not get any help until their youngster was violent. That is just not acceptable in America, Mr. President. It is not right to say that there will be no response until a young person is actually violent. We have to get there early. We have to get there with preventive strategies.

Senator SMITH and I hope to be back before the U.S. Senate with other constructive approaches in the days ahead. But let us make a strong beginning, Mr. President. Let us make a strong effort in the U.S. Senate to take the first step to averting further school tragedies. In Oregon alone, young people were apprehended with guns at school 100 times in the last school year—and those were simply the ones who were caught. So as our country goes about the business of the pleasures of summer, and as the U.S. Senate deals with what we know is going to be a very hectic schedule over the next few weeks, let's not forget about what happened in Springfield, OR, in Kentucky, in Arkansas and in Mississippi. Let us remember that our young people will be back in school in just a few weeks. Let us do our part to make sure that school violence ends here.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate now stands in recess until 2:30 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:54 p.m., recessed until 2:30 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. FRIST).